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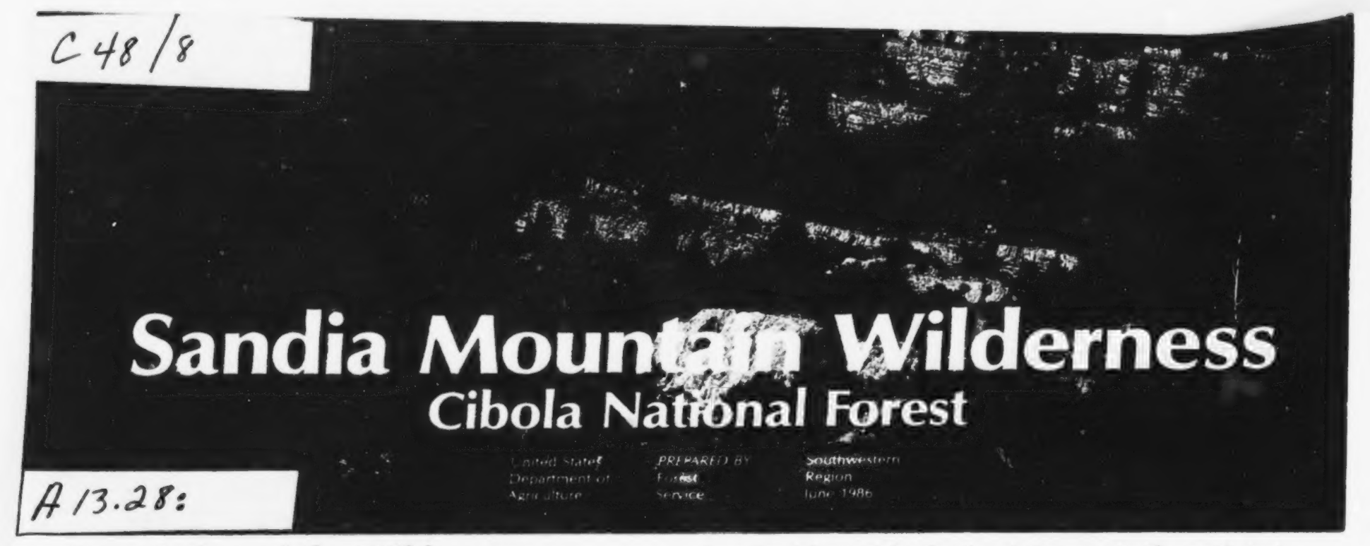

Sandia Mountain Wilderness
Cibola National Forest

United States Department of Agriculture
PREPARED BY Forest Service
Southwestern Region
June [illegible]

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Description of the Wilderness

By passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964, Congress recognized that the wilderness character of certain lands was a resource needing special protection. The Sandia Mountain Wilderness, created by the Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978, included, 30,981 acres of the Sandia Ranger District's 100,555 acres. The acquisition of the Elena Gallegos Grant in 1981 increased this wilderness to 37,232 acres.

Entrance permits are not required in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. The maximum group size is 25, but a limit of 10 is recommended. These limits will help preserve the wilderness solitude for everyone to enjoy.

The colorful Sandia Mountain symbolizes the enchantment of New Mexico. Sandia means "watermelon" and the mountain gets its name from the delicate pink coloration during sunsets. The rapid rise in elevation from 6,500 feet in its foothills to 10,678 feet at the Sandia Crest observation site almost duplicates in climate, plants, and animals, the changes experienced by traveling from the southern United States to the Canadian border. As a result, this small but majestic mountain is a mirror of the North American Continent, reflecting a surprising diversity of life. The whir of a hummingbird may lead the visitor to one of several species of orchids that live in the moist, shaded, coniferous forest. A few mountain lions and black bears enjoy the entire range of the Sandias. Three species of rattlesnakes live here accompanied by more unfamiliar, but essential, creatures of the natural world such as bats, shrews, toads, and kangaroo rats.

Wildlife

In 1921, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the Forest Service established the Sandia Wildlife Refuge to protect limited populations of such species as turkey, deer, mountain lion, and bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep were reintroduced and a small herd struggles for survival today.

Water

There are several perennial and intermittent springs and streams on the mountain, but visitors should always carry their own water or treat water from the mountain springs or streams before drinking.

Climate

Annual precipitation in the higher elevations of the Sandias is 25 to 30 inches. Winter snowfall provides three months of excellent cross-country skiing and snowshoeing on wilderness trails. The sparse pinyon-juniper woodland and grassland in the lower elevations receive 8 to 10 inches of precipitation. Heavy afternoon thunderstorms are common in July and August.

Volunteers

The Sandia Ranger District relies a great deal upon volunteers to maintain trails and to remove litter. Citizens from the surrounding urban areas participate in this work as individual volunteers and through a volunteer Adopt-a-Trail program.

Other volunteers serve as wilderness information specialists who patrol the trails. They wear Forest Service uniforms and are knowledgeable about the mountain flora and fauna, the trails, first aid, and wilderness "no trace" use.

If you are interested in this program, contact the Sandia Ranger Station.

Safety

Every year the mountain exacts a toll of victims from the unwary, the unprepared, and the unfit. The change from a modern urban city to stark wilderness is abrupt. Drastic changes in weather and temperature can occur in minutes. The terrain is extremely rough and taxing. The rough granite face of the west side tempts inexperienced climbers. Keep your wilderness experience a safe and happy one by observing a few precautions and preparing for possible emergencies.

The chief hazards to be aware of are storms, hypothermia, dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and getting lost.

Storms — Sudden storms, often accompanied by lightning, may lower temperatures at the higher elevations dramatically. Seek protection off ridges and away from lone trees. Always carry warm clothing.

Hypothermia — **Rapid chilling may lead to hypothermia (the cooling of the body core), a medical emergency, even in air temperatures as high as 30 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit. It is indicated by disorientation, slurred speech, uncontrollable shivering, and poor coordination. To reduce the danger, avoid exhaustion or becoming chilled and wet, particularly in windy weather.** Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration (see below). Do not drink alcohol because this dilates the blood vessels and speeds the loss of essential body heat. Hypothermia can be treated by taking shelter from the wind, getting as dry as possible, warming the body externally, eating high energy food and drinking warm liquids if available. Sound judgment is impaired by hypothermia. Having a companion to aid you may save your life.

Dehydration — Exertion at high elevations causes loss of body moisture through the lungs and through sweating. This thickens the blood and slows circulation, preventing the warming of extremities in cold weather and the cooling of the body in hot weather. (Dehydration is not always accompanied by thirst, so make it a practice to carry and drink plenty of water.) Dehydration is a contributing factor in *heat exhaustion* and the more serious condition *heat stroke*.

Heat Exhaustion — This is the body's response to water fluid losses exceeding intake in hot weather. The usual symptoms are a pale, clammy face, profuse sweating, weakness, and nausea. The treatment for heat exhaustion is to have the victim lie down with feet elevated. Cool with a wet cloth and fan the victim. If the victim is conscious, give ½ teaspoon of salt and 4 ounces of water every 15 minutes — 3 times.

Heat Stroke — This response is to strenuous exercise in extremely hot weather caused by loss of fluids and salt. The common symptoms are very high body temperature and red, hot, dry skin, as the body's sweating mechanism is blocked. The treatment is to cool the victim by applying cool water or wet blankets. Immerse the victim in a stream if possible. Seek medical aid at once. Prevention of both heat exhaustion and heat stroke are to reduce exertion during the hot part of the day. Drink plenty of water and take occasional salt tablets.

Lost — Disorientation accompanied by panic. If you filed a hiking plan with a friend or relative, giving a time of return, you know a search will eventually be undertaken. Your best course of action is to stay put and make a shelter. However, you can always travel by daylight downhill in the Sandias and eventually come to civilization, so try to relax. Consult your map, observe the terrain carefully. Rest when necessary, and in inclement weather seek shelter and wait for better travel conditions. *Your chief hazards are exhaustion and lack of judgment caused by panic.*

Make sure the person you left your hiking plan with understands that you need extra time in case you are merely delayed before a search is initiated. Persons have been seriously injured trying to adhere to rigid schedules.

Plague — Bubonic plague is carried by fleas from infected rodents. Avoid camping or lying near rodent runs or burrows and avoid handling rodents. The presence of a pet such as a dog increases your chances of contracting plague from the fleas. Plague and flu symptoms are very similar and include headache, nausea, pain and swelling of the lymph glands in the groin and arm pits. Onset is about one week from exposure. Seek prompt medical treatment — plague can be fatal.

Giardia — *Giardia lamblia* is a micro-organism that is found in water contaminated by animal or human feces. The preferred treatment is to filter all the water with an approved filter. This tiny protozoan parasite can also be killed in drinking water by 10 minutes at rapid boil or by 20 to 30 minutes contact with concentrated iodine. Halazone tablets are not recommended since Giardia has a resistance to chlorine. Symptoms of giardiasas are chronic diarrhea, bloating, intestinal cramps, and loss of weight. Giardiasas is easily cured with prompt medical attention.

The "No Trace" Ethic

Wilderness, by definition, is an area "where earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man" who is himself only a visitor. Everyone entering it in a sense diminishes it and must accept responsibility for the protection of the fragile environment.

Certain activities are expressly prohibited by federal regulations in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness:

1. Possessing or using a motor vehicle or motorized equipment.

2. Possessing or using a hang-glider or bicycle. Inquire at Ranger Station for recommended routes for trail bikes, etc.

3. Landing of aircraft, or dropping or picking up of any material, supplies, or person by means of aircraft, including a helicopter.

Visitors to the wilderness are asked to observe these "no trace" ethics:

1. Cutting across trail switchbacks. Cutting them accelerates erosion and increases the impact on wilderness. Walk in the middle of trails, not the edges, to reduce sloughing of the trail.

2. Camp away from trails, at least 300 feet from springs or streams and fragile meadows, in a spot that does not require leveling or trenching.

3. Use a stove for cooking or, lacking that, a very small fire built in mineral soil without a fire ring and burn all fuel completely.

4. Burn only fallen dead wood. (Do not cut branches or standing dead trees. They provide beauty and wildlife habitat.)

5. Drown fires and scatter the cold ashes in trees and brush before you leave.

6. Bury all human waste 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 300 feet from trails or water.

7. Pack out all trash (yours and others') including cigarette butts (filters degrade very slowly), pull tabs, orange peels, plastic, and aluminum foil. YOU PACKED IT IN — YOU CAN PACK IT OUT.

8. Leave all plants, flowers, shrubs, and trees undisturbed. Do not remove or cut branches for beds or shelters.

9. Use "earth tone" clothing and camping equipment for visual continuity. Keep your emergency, high visibility clothing with you in your pack.

10. Replace rocks and logs used in camp in their original positions.

11. Leave pets at home. It shows respect for others, protects your pet from being injured or lost, and increases your chances of seeing wildlife.

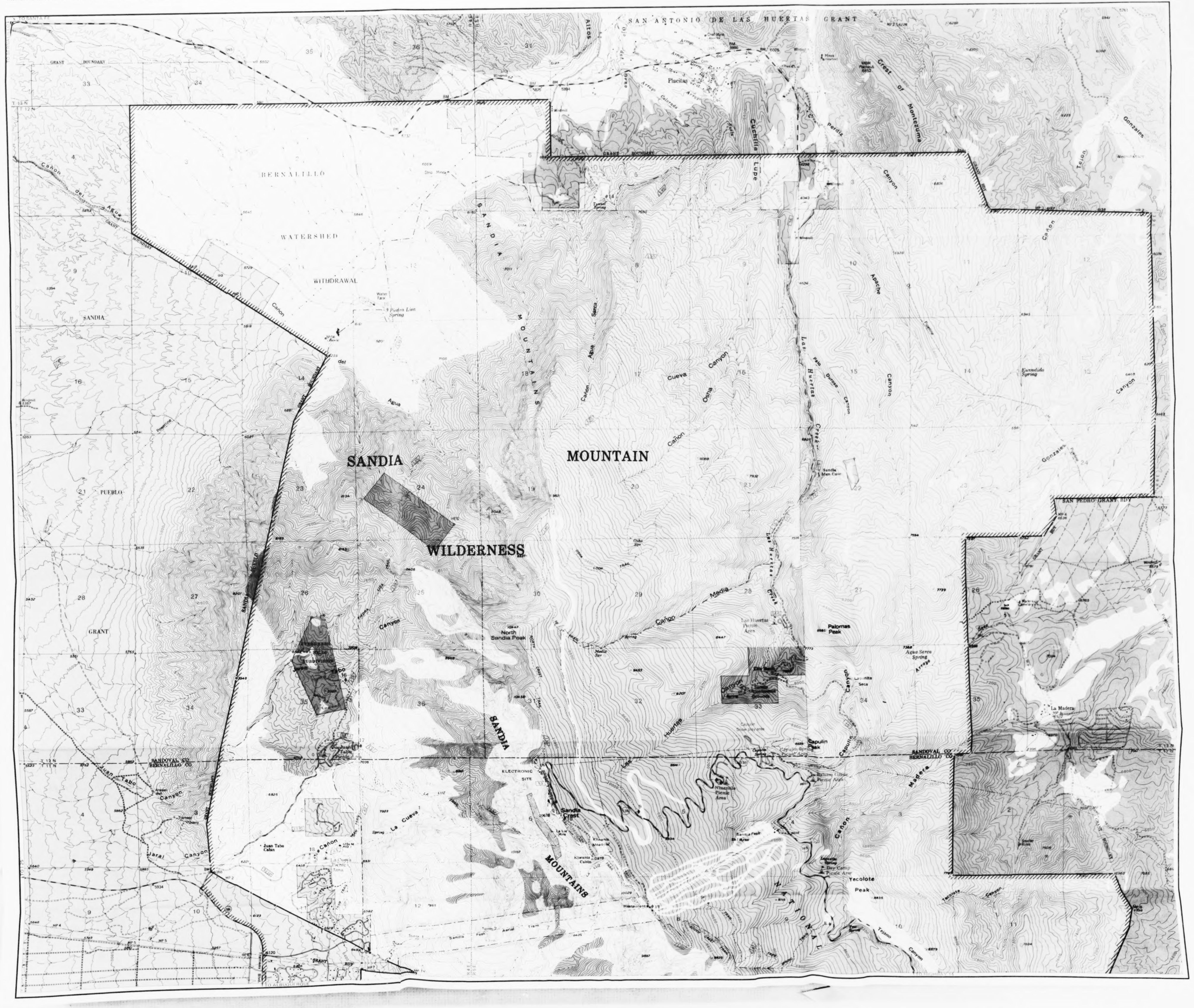
12. Horses are permitted on all trails except Crest Spur Trail #84. Caution: some trails at some times are crowded with others such as hikers, runners, children and dogs. Consider the temperament of your horse and your ability before using trails at these times. Scatter horse manure, picket horses properly away from streams, springs, or alpine meadows, and carry in prepared feed. Please use horse routes or "detours" where provided.

The experienced visitor is able to travel through wilderness leaving no more than footprints.

Recommended items for a wilderness visit are: compass, topographic map, knife, waterproof matches, firestarter, food, water, signaling devices (whistle, bright signal cloth, signal mirror), flashlight, proper clothing, and a small first aid kit.

Cultural Resources — People who came here long before us usually left some evidence of their presence, such as trails, rock art, camps, houses, fields, and tools. These may be the only record we have of these prehistoric people. Important events and periods of cultural development are recorded by artifactual remains. All artifacts, including broken pottery and other remains, are protected by law.

You can help preserve these records by leaving all artifacts where you find them, by not disturbing sites, and by reporting the location of artifacts and sites to the Sandia Ranger Station. If you see someone disturbing antiquity sites, you should report them as soon as possible.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

SANDIA MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

Cibola National Forest

NEW MEXICO

1985

Scale

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 Feet

Contour Interval = 40 Feet

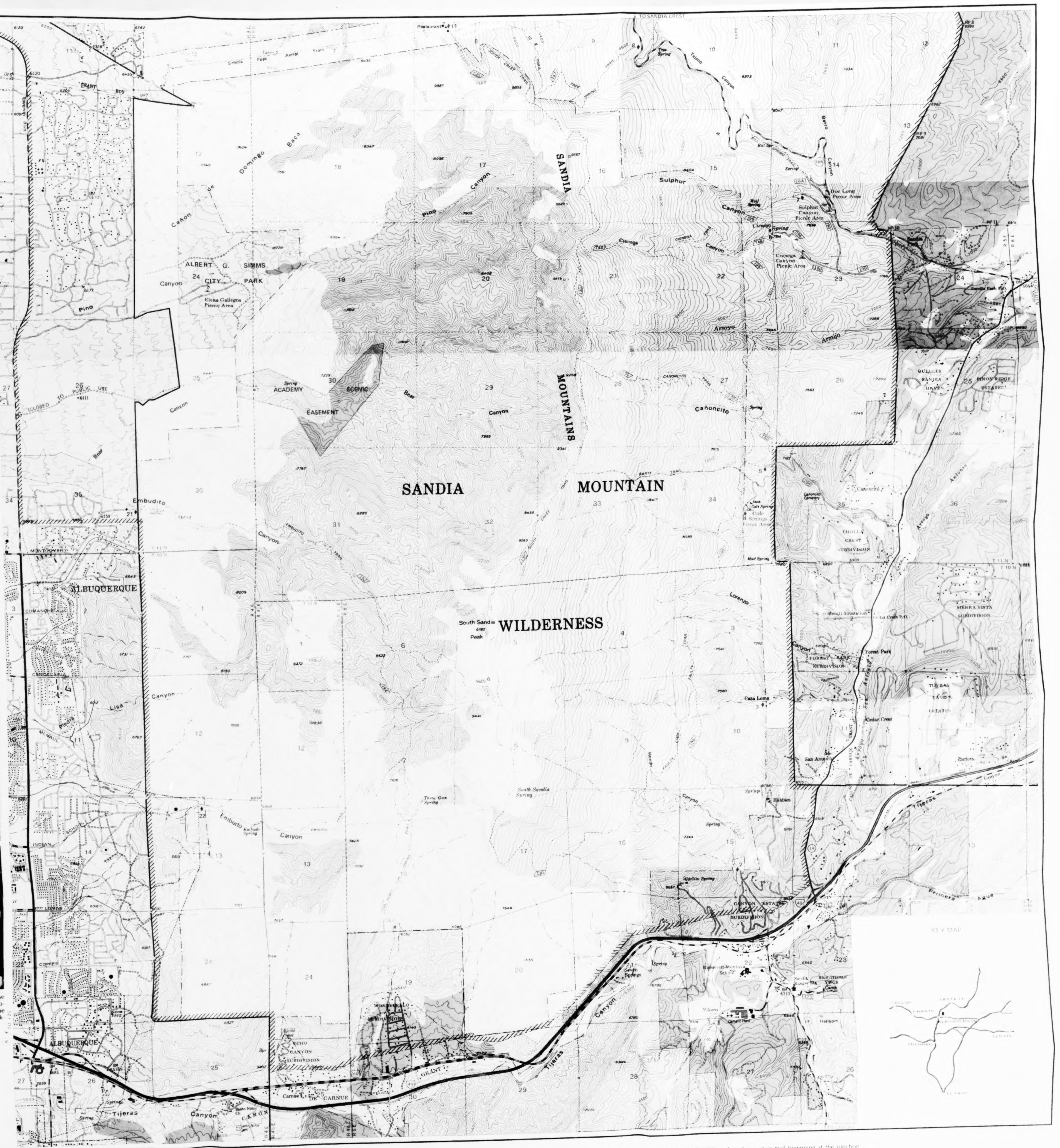
MAP LEGEND

- National Forest Boundary
- Wilderness Boundary
- County Boundary
- Sandia Game Refuge Boundary
- City of Albuquerque Open Space Areas
- Non-National Forest Lands
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- Paved or Dirt Road
- Unimproved Dirt Road
- Trail
- Trailhead
- Interstate Highway
- State Road
- Forest Road
- Forest Trail
- Recreation Site
- Quarry
- Locked Gate
- Spring
- Intermittent Stream

Prepared by
USDA Forest Service
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Printed 1985

Plants — To guarantee the enjoyment of the diversity of plants, please do not pick wildflowers or dig plants. Wildflower seed may be obtained at local garden centers. Guidebooks for identification of the plants are available at the Sandia Ranger Station and at most bookstores.

Smoking — IN THE WOODS, never ride or walk while smoking. Stop, sit down, clear a spot to bare soil, and use it as your ashtray. Be sure to put all matches, ashes, and burning tobacco OUT COLD in the bare spot. Carry out cigarette filters along with other litter.



For More Information

Contact the Sandia Ranger Station for information concerning management and use of the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. The office is located ½ mile south of I-40 on State Highway 14. The office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Write or call: USDA Forest Service
Sandia Ranger District
Star Route Box 174
Tijeras, NM 87059
Phone: (505) 281-3304

Other maps available at the Sandia Ranger Station are a cross-country ski map, USGS topographic maps, and National Forest trails maps.

Emergency Assistance — Assistance is available from the following offices as specified:

- New Mexico State Police — for mountain search and rescue — 24 hours daily, call (505) 841-8066.
- Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office — for law enforcement matters — call 281-3377 or 766-4170.
- Sandoval County Sheriff's Office — for law enforcement matters — call 867-2374.
- Sandia Ranger District Office — for reporting forest fires, law enforcement matters and wilderness use inquiries — call 281-3304.

Pay telephones are located near the wilderness at the High Finance Restaurant, the upper and lower tram terminals, Sandia Crest House (seasonal), the base of the Sandia Peak Ski Area, and in nearby communities.

Gasoline, vehicle towing, and repair are available at nearby communities only.

Trail Information

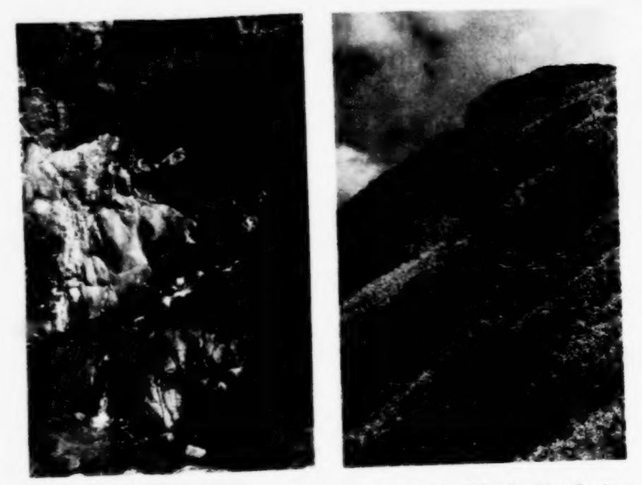
The official system of trails described here is supplemented by many unofficial trails and climbing routes. Every year many unsuspecting hikers are deceived by these unmarked trail junctions and become lost or injured. It is not possible to describe or sign every junction. You are encouraged to check your map frequently and backtrack to a known landmark if you become confused. Many of the unofficial trails end at the base or top of a technical climbing route.

Tramway Trail #82 — Beginning at a junction on La Luz Trail 1 mile above the parking area, it extends south through the foothills and Sandia Heights subdivision to the lower tram entrance gate. The trail is 2 miles in length and rated easy. (Parts of this trail near the tram have been removed due to home construction.) An alternate route for the lower end begins from the junction of the large arroyo and Spring Creek Road in Sandia Heights subdivision, follows the arroyo, joining Tramway Trail east of the old Jaral Guard Cabin site.

La Cueva Trail #83 — From Albuquerque, drive north on Tramway Boulevard to the Juan Tabo/La Cueva turnoff (Forest Road 333). Drive ¼ mile east on FR 333 to FR 333B. Turn right to the La Cueva Picnicground. The La Cueva Trail begins at the end of the parking area on the east side of the third loop of the picnicground and connects with the Tramway Trail, ¼ mile away. Elevation change is 100 feet. The trail is rated easy.

Crest Spur Trail #84 — To reach the Crest Spur Trail by car, drive to the Sandia Crest from I-40. The trail begins at the south end of the lower parking lot of the Sandia Crest area. Crest Spur Trail connects with the La Luz which gently climbs south to join the Crest Trail near the High Finance Restaurant. The trail is ½ mile in length and rated difficult. Due to a narrow staircase on this trail, no horse traffic is allowed. Elevation gain is 678 feet.

Crest Trail #130 — Beginning at the end of Canyon Estates Road, ½ mile north of I-40 and South NM 14, in the Canyon Estates subdivision in Tijeras Canyon, the trail climbs north along the ridge crest of Sandia Mountain to Sandia Crest. This portion is 16 miles in length. Then the trail continues north for 12 miles and descends to Tunnel Springs near Placitas (1½ miles south of NM 44 at the end of FR 231). The Crest Trail is 28 miles total and rated difficult. Elevation change is 4,400 feet. Many trails and climbing routes parallel or intersect the Crest Trail on the precipitous west side. *Please do not roll or throw rocks.*



Piedra Lisa Spring Trail #135 — The south end of Piedra Lisa Spring Trail is reached by driving north on Tramway Boulevard to the Juan Tabo/La Cueva turnoff (FR 333). Continue past Juan Tabo on the dirt road ½ mile to the trailhead. Piedra Lisa Trail is reached from the north by taking the Placitas exit of I-25 north, then turning south on FR 445 and east on FR 445A to the trailhead. The trail climbs over Juan Tabo Ridge, passes through Canon del Agua to Piedra Lisa Spring. The trail is 5 miles in length and rated moderate to difficult. Elevation change is 2,000 feet.

La Luz Trail #137 — The west end (or lower end) of the trail is reached by driving up Tramway Boulevard to the Juan Tabo/La Cueva area turnoff (FR 333). Drive east on FR 333 1½ miles to Juan Tabo picnicground. Drive into the picnicground and to the end of FR 333A. You may also hike this trail down from the upper tramway terminal. There the Laz Luz Trail starts ¼ mile north of the upper tram terminal. This trail is very popular with hikers. The trail is 8 miles in length and rated difficult. Elevation change is 3,300 feet.

Tree Spring Trail #147 — This is an excellent trail for family fun. Tree Springs begins 5¾ miles northwest of the NM 14/NM 44 junction on the west side of NM 44. The trail ends at its junction with Crest Trail #130 and the 10K Trail. The trail is 2 miles long and rated moderate. Elevation change is 1,000 feet.

Cienega Trail #148 — Travel north on NM 14 from I-40 for 6½ miles to the NM 44 junction. Go west on NM 44 to the La Cienega/Sulphur Canyon turnoff (1.8 miles). Drive into La Cienega picnicground, then turn right at the stop sign. Continue to the parking lot at the west end of this area. The Cienega Trail #148 goes up the canyon to the junction with Crest Trail #130. The trail is 2¾ miles long and rated moderate. Elevation change is 1,700 feet.

Canoncito Trail #150 — This trail begins just inside the National Forest boundary on Cole Spring Road (FR 299). Cole Spring Road is west of NM 14 and 4 miles north of I-40. Drive west on Cole Spring Road 1 mile where you will take the left fork. Cole Spring Road continues in a westerly direction to the trailhead 1 mile away. The trail is 3 miles long and rated moderate to difficult. Elevation gain is 1,800 feet.

Embudito Trail #192 — To reach this trailhead, travel to Tramway and Montgomery Boulevards. Go east on Montgomery for ½ mile, then northeast on Glenwood Hills Drive .4 mile to a gated road that leads to the City of Albuquerque water tank. Use the stile provided to climb over the fence here and hike up the road, then south of the tank. The trail begins beyond the water tank and follows the canyon to Oso Pass and the junction with Three Gun Spring Trail #194, then east and upward to Deer Pass and joins Crest Trail #130 near South Peak. The trail is 5½ miles long and rated difficult. Elevation gain is 3,200 feet. The lower end of this trail may be very difficult for horses.

Embudo Trail #193 — This trailhead is reached by driving east on Indian School Blvd. City of Albuquerque Open Space has constructed a parking lot at the end of Indian School for access to Open Space and the Sandia Mountain Wilderness just east of the City of Albuquerque water tank. The trail proceeds up the canyon 3½ miles where it joins Three Gun Spring Trail #194. The trail is 3½ miles long and rated moderate. Elevation gain is 1,200 feet.

Three Gun Spring Trail #194 — Drive east on I-40 to Exit 170. Continue east on US 66 for 1½ miles, then turn north into the Montecello subdivision, then west onto Alegre (½ mile). Follow Alegre for .1 mile to Siempre Verde where you will turn north to a dead-end. The trail begins here and goes north 2½ miles to the junction with Embudo Trail #193. Three Gun Spring Trail continues another 1½ miles to the junction with Embudito Trail #192 at Oso Pass. This 4-mile long trail is rated easy to moderate. Elevation change is 2,200 feet.

Faulty Trail #195 — A mid-mountain trail beginning at the junction with Crest Trail #130 one mile (lower branch) or 2 miles (upper branch) above the Canyon Estates trailhead, then north to its junction with Canoncito Trail #150, 5 miles from Canyon Estates. Faulty Trail continues another 2 miles to the junction with Cienega Trail #148. The trail is 7 miles long and rated easy. Elevation change is 600 feet.

Osha Loop Trail — Beginning at the junction with 10K Trail in Canyon Media, the trail proceeds down the canyon to Media Spring, turns northeast, and goes one mile to the junction of Osha Spring Trail. Osha Spring is .3 mile north of this junction. The Osha Loop Trail turns west at this junction and joins the Crest Trail. This trail is 2½ miles long and rated easy. Elevation change is 400 feet.

10K Trail — This trail begins near the junction of Crest Trail #130 and Tree Spring Trail #147. The trail roughly follows the 10,000-foot contour on the east side of Sandia Crest. It enters the Sandia Peak Ski Area at ¼ of a mile, then crosses FH 536 (Crest Highway) at 1½ miles, 3¼ miles from NM 44 and 2 miles from Sandia Crest. 10K ends at Crest Trail #130, 5 miles from its start. The trail is rated moderate. Elevation change is 600 feet.

Nature Trails

There are two ¼-mile long nature trails available to visitors. One begins at the Sandia Crest observation deck and the other at the upper tram terminal. These trails are adjacent to Crest Trail #130. The nature trail beginning at the Sandia Crest observation deck is reached by driving north from I-40 on NM 14 to NM 44, then to the end of NM 536, which ends at Sandia Crest. The trail goes south from the observation deck, past the Crest House Gift Shop, and down the concrete steps out toward the forest. The trail weaves along close to the edge of the Crest.

The other nature trail is reached by driving north on Tramway Boulevard to the Sandia Peak Tram Company. Ride the tram to the top of the Sandias, then hike north past the High Finance Restaurant to the end of the paved walkway. Follow the signs on the trail to the east of the Crest's edge. Signs identify items and points of interest. Both trails are self-guided and easy hikes. These trails are paralleled below the cliffs by the upper La Luz Trail and the Crest Spur Trail. *Please do not roll or throw rocks.*

Additional Wildernesses Within the Cibola National Forest

There are three additional wildernesses within the Cibola National Forest. The Manzano Wilderness is 50 miles southeast of Albuquerque in the Manzano Mountains. The Apache Kid Wilderness and the Withington Wilderness are in the San Mateo Mountains south of Magdalena.

These three wildernesses receive only limited use and offer a high degree of solitude for the hiker or backpacker. You are encouraged to use these areas not only for the outstanding wilderness experience they provide, but to lessen the impact on the Sandia Mountain Wilderness.